

# HUISH CHAMPFLOWER PARISH COUNCIL

*Clerk to the Parish: Dorothy Hayward*

*Email: ParishClerk@HuishChampflower.org*

## Meeting of Huish Champflower Parish Council held on the 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 7:30pm in the Village Hall

**Present:** Dorothy Hayward (DH) (Clerk), Mary Abel (MA), Stephen Kimsey (SK) (Chair), Stephen Powles (SPo), Louise Cook (LC), Chris Chanter (CC), Cllr Steven Pugsley (SPu) and Marc Vyvyan-Jones (MVJ).

1	<b>Apologies:</b> - Sarah Payne (SPa), Cllr Francis Nicholson (FN)	
2	<b>Declarations of Interest-</b> None	
3	<b>Minutes of the meeting on the 14th November 2023.</b> It was agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting. It was proposed that they were accepted by MA and seconded by CC, the minutes were accepted and signed off by the chair.	
4	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Woodland on the Cleeve the structure has started sliding down the hill. DH Contacted Russell Williams who responded that a formal complaint needed to be made via the Enforcement Complaint procedure online. DH to make the complaint.</li> <li>● Fencing letter was sent and followed up with queries and photographs. The diagonal path is private land, and the landowners are to mark this as such and possibly put in a gate.</li> <li>● There are not many households in the parish without access to broadband. No government vouchers are available now and this is a problem for Technological. BT have started talking to companies such as Starlink, who provide satellite broadband, this may be a solution for those households with no connection in the future.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The new 4G mast will be switched on in the spring but coverage will still be patchy depending on local geography. DH has maps if required.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	DH
5	<p><b>Updates from Somerset Council Councillors.</b> - Somerset Council is still in a very difficult financial situation. The cost of Adult and Children's social care is huge, the previous councils had invested in commercial property which is causing an issue and there are lots of redundancies still to be made. This makes things uncertain for all involved. As a parish council we currently don't know what services Somerset Council will no longer provide, and this won't be known until the 20th Feb, and our precept needs to be set before that date. If Somerset Council were to be declared bankrupt by the Responsible Financial Officer a S114 notice would be issued by the government and administrators would be sent in, the administrators would be charged at £1,000 per person per day and they would cut everything except statutory services. This would be very bleak; the councillors are trying to avoid this situation but realise they must follow a similar model. They can go to the government to request an increase in Council tax from the normal 5% to 10% and they can capitalise some revenue expenditure. However, lots of services will be cut and if parish and town councils wish to retain these services, they will have to find a way of funding them themselves. Councillors SPu and FN have identified 3 key service areas that are likely to be high priorities for parish councils in the Exmoor area to take on: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clearing ditches, drains and gullies.</li> <li>2. Providing salt bags and bins</li> <li>3. Verge cutting</li> </ol> <p>A Highway Steward could possibly take on this type of work, they currently do small roadworks very effectively, but the cost of a man, a van and management etc would be around £50K pa. However, by collaborating with the old West Somerset parish councils this might be doable and affordable. Another local parish has estimated the costs of these works for their parish at around £3500 pa.</p>	

Dorothy Hayward  
Clerk to the Council

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	The recycling centres at Dulverton and Williton are also proposed for closure, but this is subject to consultation.	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Finance</b>  <b>Balances:</b> Business Account £1075.22 and Treasurers Account £6002.86  We received £2163.03 refund of VAT in November following the installation of the swings and purchase of furniture for the village hall, both of which were grant funded. Although we may be able to make smaller claims of VAT in the next few years, this is largely a one-off payment. There is expected spend of approximately £2300 remaining this year, which will need to be paid by March 24. This should leave a balance of approximately £3.7k in the Treasurers account.  <b>Payments</b> we have the council's insurance bill to pay of £162.20. Agreed that this should be paid and DH to set up the online payment.  <b>Precept.</b> This has been unchanged since 2018, currently £3500 for the parish. Allowing for inflation increases, since 2018, and the need to fund the additional services which are unknown, have unknown costs and also to stay financially stable it was proposed to increase the precept by 50% to £5250, this is in line with other similar parishes in the area. MA proposed this was accepted, CC seconded, and this was passed unanimously. DH to complete the precept forms.</p>	DH  DH
<b>7</b>	<b>Highways</b> - Tanners dip was repaired by Wessex Water but the road is still dipping.	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Planning Matters</b> - Mr Bryant of Higher Brown Farm - the sale has fallen through, SPu will phone Mr Bryant to understand the reason why, was it because of the notice on the property?  Rectory application for a holiday let in the gatehouse has been withdrawn.  MA wrote a letter of complaint to the papers as a group of runners came through their fields on the 6th Jan and left the gate open, letting the horse out.</p>	SPu
<b>9</b>	<b>Date of next meeting:</b> - 12th March 2024	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><u>Police incidents:</u> -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Youngsters gathering in their cars at Bullands Ford occasionally, Police are aware, frightening for elderly residents.</li> <li>● Motorbikes in the old quarry are still an issue.</li> <li>● Possible drug dealing on Friday evenings near to Potters Cross</li> </ul> <p>SK to speak to the police regarding these incidents and what can be done.</p> <p>The police feedback at the LCN meeting stated that recovery of stolen goods is more likely if they are marked or tracked. This would particularly apply to Bikes, small agricultural machinery, ATV's and livestock trailers. We could hold an event at the village hall if the police were willing to help.</p> <p>A <u>Home workers lunchtime</u> meet up is starting next Friday Jan 26th between 11-1pm in the church. To be called "Business Break with coffee and cake".</p>	SK  SK